

# Utah Parks Driving Summer Tourism Season



If you pay a visit to one of Utah's national parks this summer, you may wonder if the economy really is in a recession. Since the beginning of the year, visitation to Utah's five national parks—Arches, Bryce Canyon, Canyonlands, Capitol Reef, and Zion—is up 7.4 percent. Year to date, statewide occupancy is off 8.2 percent, but lodging properties in Utah cities and towns surrounding the national parks report strong bookings this year, reflecting an influx of international visitors traveling to the parks. If you're hiking on one of the many trails, you'll likely hear multiple languages being spoken.

Tourism is Utah's sixth largest industry, according to estimates in the 2008 Economic Report to the Governor. Traveler spending rose an estimated 6.2 percent in 2008 to \$7.1 billion. An estimated 20.4 million domestic and international visitors vacationed in Utah in 2008. A majority of those visitors come from surrounding states.

In 2008, 5.6 million recreation visits were made to Utah's five national parks. Another 3 million recreation visits occurred at Utah's seven national monuments, two national recreation areas, and one national historic site.

This is a great year to visit Utah's national parks with Zion National Park, Utah's most popular, celebrating its

centennial. Activities commemorating Zion's centennial can be found online at <http://www.nps.gov/zion/parknews/a-century-of-sanctuary.htm>.

New amenities are offered at Bryce Canyon this summer. A new hotel opened in May, featuring 164 luxurious guest rooms. It's located just off of southern Utah's Scenic Byway 12, which is an All-American Road. Visitors to Bryce can also learn about astronomy through the Night Sky program, weather permitting. <http://www.nps.gov/brca/planyourvisit/astronomyprograms.htm>

More than 2,000 natural sandstone arches can be viewed in Arches National Park, including the iconic Delicate Arch. The park features a wealth of hiking trails ranging in length and difficulty. <http://www.nps.gov/arch>

Visitors to Canyonlands National Park in southeastern Utah enjoy hiking, biking, river-running or four-wheel driving in the backcountry. The Colorado and Green Rivers divide the park into three districts—Island in the Sky, Maze, and Needles. Each district has its own visitor center. <http://www.nps.gov/cany/>

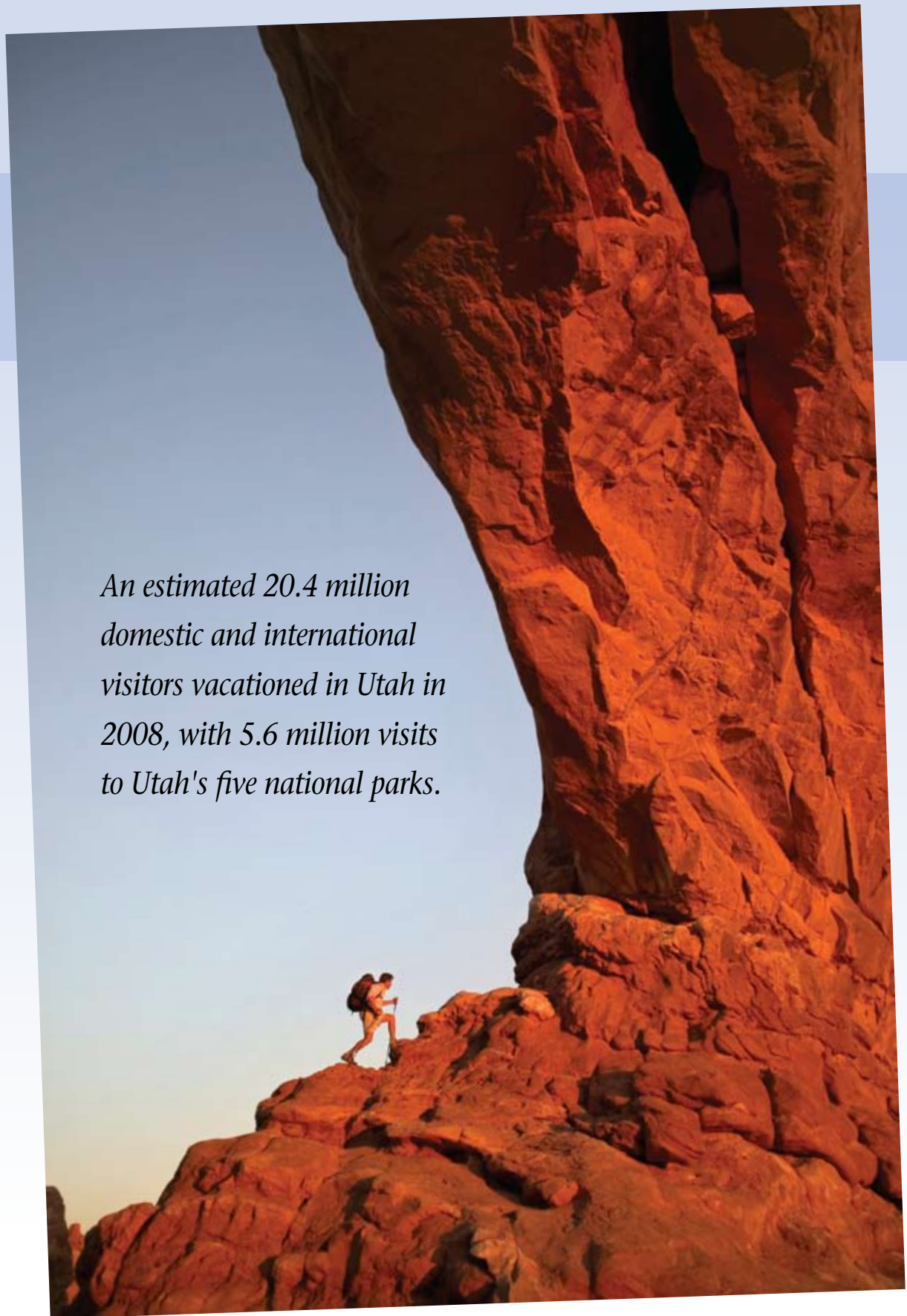
Unique to Capitol Reef National Park are the orchards that date back to the pioneers. The public can pick and keep

the fruit for a modest charge. Other popular activities include hiking and wildlife viewing. <http://www.nps.gov/care>

Visitation to Utah's state parks is estimated to be up by 2 percent. The weather was a little cool in Utah this spring, contributing to a slow start to the summer season. But, many families are planning vacations a little closer to home this year, following a national "staycation" trend. The state parks provide activities such as hiking, boating, golf or learning about Utah's Native American or pioneer history at one of the museums. <http://www.stateparks.utah.gov/>

A majority of Utah's tourists come during the warm weather months, but Utah's ski and snowboard industry attracts millions of destination visitors every year. Recently-released data shows that Utah didn't have its sixth record-breaking ski season in a row, but Utah's 13 ski resorts did enjoy their fourth-best season on record. The 2008-2009 winter season ended with a total of 3,972,984 skier days, down 6.5 percent from last year's fifth consecutive record-breaking year at 4,249,190. The resorts are also open for summer and fall activities, including hiking, biking, and outdoor concerts.

To plan your Utah vacation, visit [www.utah.travel](http://www.utah.travel) ⓘ



*An estimated 20.4 million domestic and international visitors vacationed in Utah in 2008, with 5.6 million visits to Utah's five national parks.*